WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY — Founded December 17, 1857 JANUARY 1979

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The clean-up job at the Barton Dam powerhouse to prepare the place for the December meeting of the Society was a fantastic bit of work. While the inside had been cleansed by professionals to a point where it was safe to move around without stirring up toxic dusts, there was still much to be done. The delivery of many large truck loads of materials which had been stored by the University in the Tuomy barn filled most of the first and second floor space. This material had to be spread around to other parts of the building until workable space became available. Trunks containing artifacts were opened and many of the objects were put out on display. Those of you who did not get out to see what had been accomplished missed much that was not shown in the recent Ann Arbor News article.

Strings of colored lights were placed on the dam and near the approaches to the powerhouse. The girl scouts who helped with the luminaries and in other ways deserve our sincere thanks as do the persons listed elsewhere in this issue of "Impressions" who helped to make this meeting worthwhile.

—Leigh Anderson

1865 DETROIT TRIBUNE TELLS OF ASSASSINATION

Among the treasures found in old trunks WCHS recently moved from the Tuomy House barn was a copy of The Detroit Tribune the day after President Lincoln was assassinated, Curator Stuart Thayer reports.

The entire front page of the daily Saturday, April 15, 1865 copy, apparently the third edition that day, is devoted to the story. Banner headlines were not used then but the eight columns are bordered in black. Column one is headed "The Great Tragedy at Washington."

WCHS TO LAUNCH $750,000 MUSEUM FUND DRIVE: JOHN COREY OF GLFS NAMED GENERAL CHAIRMAN

John Corey, executive vice-president of Great Lakes Federal Savings, has been named general chairman of a $750,000 capital fund drive now being launched for a Washtenaw County Historical Museum.

JOHN COREY

Upon advice of John Grenzebach & Associates, Inc., Chicago fund-raising firm which did a feasibility study, the WCHS board of directors voted to seek funds to construct a 10,000 square foot addition to Barton Powerhouse to house the Society's extensive collection and interpret county history.

Corey, who has been with Great Lakes (formerly Ann Arbor Federal) since 1959, hold's bachelor's and master's degrees from the U-M in business administration.

Glenn Richards of Grenzebach is organizing the campaign from an office donated by George Wahr Publishing Company, 304½ South State Street, Ann Arbor. Rosalie Collie, a volunteer, will work with him.

A steering committee is being organized. Tentatively, advance gifts solicitation will begin in February and the general gifts campaign in April. Later a long-term endowment fund drive is proposed for operating funds.

The proposed addition will include gallery, office and work space, gift shop, kitchen and terrace overlooking Barton Pond. A one-room school, blacksmith and cooper's shops are to be on the grounds.

WCHS MEETING AT BENTLEY LIBRARY JANUARY 25; DIRECTOR, ARCHIVIST PLAN ANN ARBOR PROGRAM

John Allen's original 1824 plat of Ann Arbor and a pioneer woman's 1831 letter about the town will be some of the things to see and hear about at the next WCHS meeting which is open to the public.

It will be in Bentley Library, home of the Michigan Historical Collections on the University of Michigan's North Campus, at 8 p.m. Thursday, January 25.

Dr. Robert M. Warner, director of the library, and Mary Jo Pugh, reference archivist, plan a dialogue and exhibits on "Ann Arbor History from the Perspective of Bentley Library."

The library is on Beal Avenue just north of Glacier Way. There is parking by the building and in nearby lots.

The route both speakers took to their present positions ignored the famous admonition "Go West." Both were born there—Dr. Warner in Montrose, Colorado, and Miss Pugh in Polson, Montana—and came east.

Both developed an early interest in history. Dr. Warner became interested in local history as a Presbyterian minister's son living in small towns. Miss Pugh says she's "always been a packrat" and became concerned about memory preservation.

Dr. Warner graduated from Muskingum College in Ohio and earned master's and doctoral degrees from the University. With the library for 25 years, he started as student assistant and worked up through "every job in the library."

Miss Pugh graduated from the University of Chicago and earned master's degrees in history and library science from the U—M.

CHRISTMAS IN THE KITCHEN

ALL ABOUT PAGAN COOKIES, OTHER TREATS

December 25 was celebrated long before the Christian era and some of our holiday customs today date back to those times, Alloa Anderson pointed out in her talk at the December meeting in the powerhouse on "Christmas In The Kitchen."

She spoke following remarks and a dedicatory prayer by the Reverend Henry Yoder, semi-retired Lutheran minister who has served in this county since 1932, and a report on the status of the museum project by Hazel Proctor, museum committee chairman. President Leigh Anderson presided and thanked those who helped with the party.

Mrs. Anderson, told the story of some of the cookies and illustrated with cookies from the refreshment table which she had baked. Her handmade Christmas tree skirts, embroidered and appliqued with symbols and traditions of Christmas, served as tablecloths.

"This is the time of year when the sun in the northern hemisphere is at its lowest point—our nights are the longest and days the shortest. People have always made celebrations out of events that were happening to them, she said. On short days they needed lights, so they said, "Let's make a ceremony with lights."

When calendars were set up in Roman times, it was called the time of the saturnalia. It took place between the 17th and 24th of December as we know it. People closed all their offices and businesses, gave gifts to their friends and decorated their houses with greenery and fruits—almost a combination of our Thanksgiving and Christmas. They also gave gifts to the poor.

The end of the equinox gave them opportunity to celebrate on December 25. Strange as it seems the 25th of December comes through in all kinds of religions and societies.

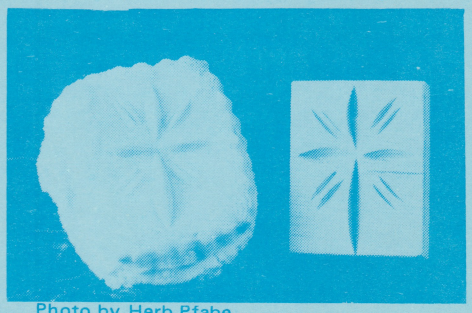

Photo by Herb Pfabe

SPRINGERLE WITH MOLD

Along came the Christians who tried to uproot a lot of customs. They couldn't do it and then decided "If you can't win 'em, join 'em." Many of our customs are a combination of these old Saturnalia observances with a Christian twist.

Middle European area pagans who lived in the forest worshipped the oak tree. It was their main meeting place and a symbol of stability. They had councils of war and religious meetings there. If anybody had to pay the price of being hung or beheaded, it was done under the oak tree.

The Christians said they couldn't do those things anymore but these people played it both ways. They observed Christian customs but gave their friends symbols of their old traditions in the form of these little cookies—German springerles, picturing the fruits and animals of the forest.

By the time Germans came to Ann Arbor to settle in the 1820's and 1830's, they brought with them iron springerle molds in the shape of the twelve apostles and the church steeple.

Through the years there have been many little wooden molds made and I think all of you have seen the rolling pin with things carved on it.

My advice about rolling pins is don't bother to buy them for the simple reason that the majority of the people who are doing the carving nowadays are not skillful. They are not interested in the proper traditions. The designs have no significance in terms of the history of this particular little cooky.

I know people who have made springerle in those old iron molds and the molds are still in town. If anyone ever gets their hands on one for our museum, for heaven's sake, regardless of what it costs, get it, she said.

I don't know how many of you remember the Karpps who used to have the Caravan Shop in Nickels Arcade across from the postal substation. Mr. Karpp remembered springerle as his mother made them. When he found I was interested in good springerle forms he would look for them on buying trips, she said. I have molds illustrating Hans Christian Andersen stories and some of Grimm's fairytales.

I bought a Christmas tree mold in Holland, Michigan, just this fall. I have looked and looked to find a Christmas tree where the candles were sufficiently detailed in the cutting so that when I pressed the dough into them I could get the picture of the candle.

Many molds are sloppy and the wood is undercut to the point where you couldn't possibly get the dough out of it. These are the kinds of things that you need to watch out for when buying molds.

In the last few years a foundry has been casting aluminum springerle molds picturing the colonial trades—this one is of a cooper making a barrel, she said.

Ordinarily springerles would break your teeth they are so hard. A good friend and I, who liked to do things together, agreed that springerles as we know them would not be the kind of product that those old world women would have been satisfied with—our houses are too warm, our flour and ingredients different from what they had.

One night she and I wore out a Dover beater, wore out beating by hand and wore out a power beater using the same ingredients but

doing different things with different kinds of equipment to see whether that had anything to do with it. We finally worked out a recipe with more shortening which holds its shape but is soft enough to eat.

There is only one disadvantage—I miss the anise flavored coffee that I used to get at this time of year from soaking springerles.

Many of the traditions that these cookies are only a symbol of are still carried on. The boar's head feast that the Presbyterian Church does each year is a perfectly beautiful church service, an old world tradition with words and ceremonies exactly as they have been for years and an old world meal ending with plum pudding and brandy sauce.

Lights have been part of the celebration from the beginning. Some kind of light is traditionally supposed to have been used to light the way of the Holy Family as they fled. All of our lights are our interpretation of that tradition.

When we get into the kitchen with all these customs, we have all kinds of fun. Of course each of us adapts the recipes to our own thinking and technique.

In Ann Arbor you all know lebkuchen as a molasses cooky about two-and-a-half inches wide by five inches long with a whole blanched almond in the center and finely chopped citron in it.

This is what it looks like as far as I'm concerned—a two-inch square, glazed with icing and decorated with small pieces of red and green cherries. It is made with honey and brown sugar, not molasses.

I will never forget my first introduction to lebkuchen. A German woman said she made them on the fourth of July to send to her son in the army and she hoped to get them there by Christmas.

The recipe that I have is from Grace Rash whose relatives used to have a grocery store on South University. Her mother made and sold Christmas cookies there for many years.

The original recipe directions said you were supposed to let the dough sit overnight and roll and cut it in the morning. It's a lot easier to push it in a jelly roll pan and bake at once, put icing and decorations on and cut it.

There are as many other kinds of cookies as people can make shapes out of what they can do with flour, sugar, fat, sometimes eggs, sometimes nuts in it or on it. You can get shortbreads—Scottish or Finnish Bread—a little bar with chopped almonds on top—or similar Danish *makronstaenger*.

The original directions for Finnish bread said take a little piece, roll it out, brush it with egg and sprinkle almonds on it. I don't like to do it that way. I make it in a block, then I put egg white on it, then chopped almonds, pressing them in gently so they stick, then cut it into bars with a pastry wheel, cut the bars in small pieces, transfer several at a time to the cooky sheets and first thing you know, the job is done.

Danish "esses" can be handled similarly. They are the letter "S", but if you have children in the family then you make all the letters of their names, and everybody gets a chance at making his letters.

There are Swedish peppernuts or *pepparnotter*—a spicy dough with pepper in it, formed in balls around salted peanuts, and German cinnamon stars, a meringue with grated almonds.

It is important with Swedish brown lace cookies or *bruna flarn* to use only one-half teaspoon of dough with plenty of space between them as they spread widely. The dough should be flattened, she noted, so they cook in the center and flow properly to get all the bubbliness that makes the lace effect.

Norwegian *fattigmansbakkles* or poor man's cookies are cooked in deep fat. You roll the dough very thin like piecrust, she said, cut in strips, cut the strips in diamonds and cut a slit in the middle of each diamond. As you are ready to put it in the fat, pull one point through the slit. If it breaks, that's all right—there's just that many more that you have to eat before they spoil!

In this country we can assimilate traditions from everywhere and build them into our own. One thing that I think is important about Christmas traditions is that without realizing it by the things we do for the holiday, we have established or continued traditions and we can be proud that in the thoughts of a descendant generation there is the thought, "I can remember that my grandparents did it this way."

THANKS TO ALL WCHS CHRISTMAS PARTY HELPERS

Thanks are due to all those who helped in any way with the WCHS Christmas party at Barton Powerhouse.

Special thanks are due to Girl Scouts of Newport School Troops 600 and 696 and Great Lakes Federal Savings. Mrs. Sarah Nooden and Mrs. Ellen St. Amour directed the girls from Troop 696 and Mrs. Anna Marie Shaffer from Troop 600.

The Scouts made tree decorations and luminaries, and greeted and guided visitors. Great Lakes loaned and transported tables, chairs, lectern and microphone and poinsettias.

Mary Meade, an MSU graduate student in museum exhibits arranged the displays. Matt Shevrin was organist.

Hazel Proctor and Herb Pfabe were co-chairmen. Others who helped in various ways include Leigh and Alloa Anderson, Tom and Harriet Lacy, Stuart Thayer, Sam Sturgis, David Braun, Dr. William Bender, Bruce Perkins, Carol and Glen Freeman, Wilma Steketee, Esther Warzynski, Lois Foyle, Angela Welch, Sam Breck, Bob Breck, Kevin Conboy, Don Proctor, John Proctor, Ethelyn Morton and Alice Ziegler.

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DRAFTY BARTON DAM POWERHOUSE TRANSFORMED INTO SHORT-ORDER MUSEUM FOR CHRISTMAS

WCHS got "home for Christmas" in Barton Powerhouse thanks to the combined efforts of many helpers in the society and community.

Hazel Proctor and Herb Pfabe were co-chairmen of the effort which transformed the drafty old building filled with dusty artifacts into a short-order museum decked with Christmas greenery and lights.

Drawn by Hazel Proctor

BARTON DAM & POWERHOUSE

MILAN CHOOSES OFFICERS

Milan Historical Society re-elected Warren R. Hale president at its December meeting. Andrea Rumps is the new secretary. Leonard Garlick and out-going secretary Susan Bies were named to the board.

Arligh Squires and Carol Smith will continue as vice-president and treasurer, respectively. Other directors are Lorene Burger, Bill Smith and Oliver Curry.

MUSEUM EXPERT SPEAKS

Jerry Roe, member and past chairman of the Michigan Historical Commission, and an expert on museums, addressed the January WCHS board and museum committee meeting. Through his work with the commission he has seen most of the museums in the state and is helping plan a new state museum. He gave many valuable insights.

P. O. BOX 8006. THAT'S US.

Mail may now be addressed to Washtenaw County Historical Society (or WCHS), P. O. Box 8006, Ann Arbor, MI 48107.

GIRL SCOUTS ADOPT US

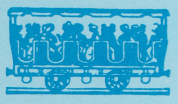
Newport School Girl Scouts of Troops 600 and 696 who helped with the Christmas party want to adopt the museum as an on-going project so the WCHS board has voted to make them honorary members.

GENEALOGISTS TO HEAR ST. THOMAS PRIEST

The Reverend George Michalek, associate pastor of St. Thomas Catholic Church in Ann Arbor, will speak at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, January 28, at Washtenaw Community College. His topic is "Experiences of a Researcher in England." A 1 p.m. help session is planned.

TOPIC IS 'OLD WEST SIDE'

Ann Arbor's Old West Side and how it got to be a historic district will be the topic of the February 22 Washtenaw County Historical Society meeting. It will be at 8 p.m. in Liberty Hall. Martin Lee will speak.



HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society—8 p.m. second Monday of month at McKune Memorial Library.

Dexter Historical Society—Hazel Proctor, WCHS museum committee chairman, will talk at 8 p.m. Thursday, February 1, at the Dexter museum about the proposed county museum at Barton Powerhouse. Potluck supper, 6:30 p.m.

Manchester Historical Society—8 p.m. Monday, January 22, at Methodist Church. Report of Manchester Historical District architecture survey last summer to be presented by Phil Grillo, an MSU student who helped with it. The society will also discuss its objectives and goals for 1979.

Saline Historical Society—8 p.m. third Tuesday of month at Saline High School.

Ypsilanti Historical Society—Annual business meeting, 3-5 p.m. Sunday, January 21, at the museum, 220 N. Huron.

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

8:00 p.m. THURSDAY

JANUARY 25, 1979

Bentley Historical Library
U-M North Campus
Beal near Glacier Way

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